JUST PLAYING THE HAPPINESS GAME WITH POLLYANNA.

Patricia Collinge Defends Her Be Glad Girl From the Critics Who Discover a Theory of Life in Sunny Optimism of "Le's Pretend"

Photos by White.

POLLYANNA and JIMMY (STEPHEN DAVIS) PLANNING THE INVASION OF KING GROUCH'S CASTLE.

POLLYANNA ABOUT TO PRODUCE SODOM and GOMORRAH—THE DOG and KITTEN—AS PRESENTS FOR HER AUNT.

CENTER GROUP SHOWS POLLYANNA INTRODUCING JIMMY BEAN FROM THE ORPHAN ASYLUM TO HER AUNT and MRS. GREGG, THE LADIES' AIDER. JIMMY (STEPHEN DAVIS) MRS. GREGG (MAUD HOLSFORD).

POLLYANNA (PATRICIA COLLINGE)

POLLYANNA TELLING THE FAIRY STORY TO "OLD KING GROUCH"—(PATRICIA COLLINGE and EARL BROWNE).

TWENTY years ago in the old town of Dublin a little blond haired, blue eyed, four-year-old daughter of Ireland was playing with her brother among the flowers in their mother's garden. And all at once the little girl had a beautiful thought.

"Wouldn't it be nice," she asked her brother, "if all the roses and pinks and lilies and vi'lets were fairy princesses? Le's pretend they are.

But brother snorted scornfully.

"Wouldn't it be nice," he said, "if all the flowers and leaves were five pound notes!"

This practical young male is now an engineer in New York city, but the child who wanted the flowers to be fairy princesses is carrying out her baby wish of "le's pretend" and to-day she is making tired men and women forget the hard things of life, for a night at least, by her charming impersonation of the blithe little child called *Pollyanna* at the Hudson Theatre. And no one is more surprised than Patricia Collinge that any critics should take her "be glad" girl to mean that she is trying to get it across the footlights that evil is not to be dealt with but ignored, that folks ought to be foolishly, mawkishly happy no matter how much suffering there is.

"Why, *Pollyanna* is just playing a game, she isn't making a theory of life," Miss Collinge says, looking up over the arm of the big armchair in which she is sitting in a sunny parlor facing Central Park, for we have caught her, you understand, not in the theatre but in the cosey flat where she lives with her father and mother and two brothers and her grandmother.

And when she talks it is easy to understand why she is so perfectly a child when she skips on the stage in the pink checked frock that came in the missionary barrel. She has evidently, more than most persons of 24, kept the simple, childlike way of looking at things, not fretting too much over big problems or trying to untangle the hard knots, but pursuing her way trustingly, doing the thing she had to do.

And the minute her mother, who is an older edition of "Patsy," comes into the room it is evident that the girl has grown up and bloomed in an atmosphere of such wholesome, sensible love that it wasn't necessary for her to go outside of that in her work for happiness or distraction, and so she has escaped the influences which tend to make actresses the sophisticated creatures that—well, that they are supposed to be more often perhaps than they are.

"*Pollyanna* is playing a game," says Patsy (let's call her that because it suits her). "And the 'be glad' game doesn't mean that we are to rejoice because we have a broken leg or because people are starving somewhere or there is a war. No one but an idiot would smile over evil. No, it just means that we are to look around and find the things there are to be glad about and make the most of those.

"Of course *Pollyanna* would never have reasoned this game out for herself. She doesn't reason at all about it. She is just doing what her father told her to do. He wanted his little girl, that poor missionary did, to be as happy as possible and do as much good as she could, and he hadn't anything to leave her, so he taught her to keep a sunny heart and sunny face, and because children love games and remember them longer than just teaching he made it a game.

"I will admit that I get a bit tired sometimes of saying the word 'glad' so much. At the end of a performance I frequently feel that 'glad' will not have a place in the bright lexicon of this young woman for the next twenty-four hours, or till the curtain goes up again on 'Pollyanna.' But I don't swear at the scene shifter or throw things at my maid, as one critic said he hoped I 'found relief from the mawkishness' by doing."

Patsy giggles as she breaks off in her explanation of the play, an explanation which she makes in a clear little voice and with an unstudied simplicity which tells you that she didn't have to seek out the way to tell her fairy story to "Old King Grouch" in the scene in the castle. She is just being herself in that fairy story scene, which, by the way, is her favorite scene of the whole play.

"I'm very fond of the scene shifters and I wouldn't hit one of them for the world," she goes on. "I sometimes lead my maid an awful life and if you want to know about me you ought to interview her.

"Oh, being Irish, I like to fight, but I don't fight people much. The kind of fight I like is understanding something that is very difficult and overcoming it, and then feeling good about it, saying, 'Well, I didn't give in, I was pretty brave'—like after going to the dentist, you know.

"But to get back to 'Pollyanna,' I don't think anybody ought to be too serious in analyzing that play. There is a serious lesson in it, the kind of lesson that Phœbe Cary puts in the poem where she says that the world is a mirror that shows you the kind of face you present to it; if you smile the world is much more likely to smile back than if you scowl.

"I don't think people do good just by always thinking of the sorrow there is. Why, everybody knows how when a little chuckling, grinning baby is brought into a street car all the tired, preoccupied men and women sit up and watch it and smile and forget what was worrying them.

"Do you know what I think the most beautiful line in 'Pollyanna'? It is where she says to *John Pendleton*, Old King Grouch, when she has found him in his castle: 'Just because you close the shutters doesn't mean the sun isn't still shining.'

"There are lots of folks that close the shutters, and I think it does an audience good to see a play where a child just flings the shutters open and lets the light in. I think people like to rest from all the struggles and troubles and worries they've had and see a play that makes them laugh a little and cry a little—yes, I've seen them doing that too.

"Maybe some of the lines are mawkish, but I don't think anything *Pollyanna* says or *Jimmy Bean* the orphan boy—I don't think the things they say are at all impossible. Think what queer and wise and funny things the real children we know are always saying! And who knows what passes through a child's head?

"This is the first child part I have acted in my eight years on the stage, but I always loved to read about children in books. Sentimental Tommy—remember him? I do like Barrie's children, and those in the stories of Kenneth Graham. And I never get tired of Mrs. Martin's Emmy Lou, that dear little, queer, funny, inarticulate schoolgirl. I like some of Dickens's children, David Copperfield and Pip in 'Great Expectations,' and poor little Paul Dombey. I can't stand Little Nell, though I stand amazed before her goodness to her awful old grandfather.

"Kipling's children? Yes, of course I adore them. Who could help it—Wee Willie Winkle and the rest? Isn't it wonderful how many great writers have tried to interpret children to us, and we don't understand children very well yet!

"I think having such a happy home myself helped me to be full of sympathy for *Pollyanna*, who comes a little orphaned girl from the bare missionary home which wasn't so bare, after all, for her parents gave her plenty of love, but who loses them and comes to her prim aunt, and has the heartbreaking blow of finding that *Aunt Polly* didn't want her, but is just taking her through duty. I don't have to try to act like a child—I just feel that I am her.

"I, *Pollyanna*, just can't realize that *Aunt Polly* and the Ladies Aiders are as unloving as they try to think they are, and so I keep bringing things for them to love—poor tiny Sodom and Gomorrah, the puppy and kitten I lugged from my missionary home; and *Jimmy Bean*, the little boy that ran away from the orphan asylum because he wanted a father and mother. Haven't you seen that touching child faith that the grownups just must be interested in the things that he, the child, is showing them? Haven't you seen it melt away primness, even such primness as that of *Aunt Polly* and the Ladies Aiders, and grouchiness, even such grouchiness as that of *John Pendleton* in the big house over the hedge that seems a castle to *Pollyanna* and *Jimmy*?

"Of course all that about *Pollyanna* being the picture of her mother, whom *John* had loved twenty years ago, when they were young, had to be in the play for heart interest. It is rather hard on *John Pendleton* and *Dr. Chiltern* to have to sit there before an audience of New Yorkers and talk of their devotion to the loves of twenty years before, but after all that sort of thing isn't so entirely idealistic. I believe that even in this rather cynical age men and women sometimes love like that.

"Aren't we always reading in the papers about a pair of lovers reuniting and wedding after being parted for a generation or so? Then why smile at *Dr. Chiltern* and *Aunt Polly* coming together after twenty years, or at *John Pendleton* shutting himself up in his house and turning his face from the world because he believed the girl he loved was faithless to him, and only letting the light into his life when he discerns through her child's unconscious talk that she loved him all the time and it was just fate that parted them."

Here Miss Collinge stops talking and gets up out of the armchair and puts on a little plain hat and a plain jacket atop of her simple shirtwaist and skirt, and says she's awfully sorry, but she has to go to a rehearsal at noon. As she stands up an artist accustomed to study figure proportions would see at once another reason why she is so perfectly the child in her present part.

Her head is like the head of a girl of 12 years, rather large for her body. One of her most frequent expressions is the little perplexed crease in her forehead that *Pollyanna* so often has when she isn't laughing, when she is trying to figure something out.

Her mother, as has been said, is just a slightly older but still young and slightly plumper—not very—edition of her actress daughter. She comes into the room beaming and tells you proudly that nothing was ever put in the way of Patricia's being an actress. The opposition that some girls have to overcome to go on the stage never impeded her daughter.

"I think it's the nicest profession in the world," she says. "To go before an audience of men and women and make them laugh and cry just by what you say and do—it's wonderful.

"I think Patsy always wanted to act. She always did act. Dear me, I remember her in the garden at home, back in Dublin, playing with the pebbles and the flowers and the trees, and always pretending to be a fairy or a princess—generally a princess. She'd amuse herself all day long, but she was great on being a princess.

"Her first appearance? Well, I believe it was when she was about 10 months old, and she held to the railing at the foot of the bed and danced up and down and sang. She could hardly toddle when she began to do that. Her first public appearance was when she was 4 years old, and the hurdygurdy was playing in front of the house, and she went dancing nearer and nearer the steps till all at once she danced over the edge of the top one, and tumbled down and burst upon a startled world."

"I don't remember that," says Patsy. "I remember some hard bumps I got when a child, but not that one. Well, after such a beginning it wasn't strange that I should go into musical comedy when I took to the stage. Yes, musical comedy was my fate at first, when eight years ago, just after the family came to America, I went upon the stage."

"Patricia always went to see every good play that came to Dublin," says the mother. "There seemed to be a feeling that this was to be her life, and we did everything we could to prepare her for the profession."

"I believe that our fate is marked out for us before we are born, and I couldn't have avoided mine if I had wanted to—which I didn't," says little Miss Collinge. "And I've loved acting, and I've loved working at it, and I have worked so hard that perhaps I haven't thought as much of other things as I should. Suffrage, now; I don't really know whether I'm a suffragist or not. I'm not against it, but I'm on the fence." She wabbles her expressive hands to illustrate how she isn't sure which way she will jump.

"But maybe I won't jump. I'm so busy working that I can't study those things as one must to know. I don't know much about politics, though of course I keep in touch with events, as one must. I believe the personal side of things touches me most. I was most hurt by the smaller, or what the world would call the smaller, aspects of Roger Casement's hapless adventure.

"For example, a friend of ours, a man I knew well in Dublin, just went out in his yard one day during the rebellion and a man shot him. That made me furious. He had nothing to do with it and he had to die. What use was the rebellion? Ireland wouldn't be happy if she were free. Ireland doesn't want to be free. Irishmen," laughs Miss Collinge, "wouldn't be happy if they didn't have something to fight about. We do love to fight."

Then she goes out to the elevator with a "Good-by, mother darling. I'll be home after rehearsal for tea," and goes down and boards an Eighth avenue car.

"I want to get home in time for a ride in the park," she says. "This is such a convenient flat, it is near the riding stable where I can get horses and near the rink for ice skating, near all the things I do, or as Frank Jefferson, Joseph Jefferson's son, tells me, 'near the things I try to do.'

"I love riding and skating and I don't care for the amusements where you sit and some one does things to entertain you. I get amusement out of the queerest little things. The other day I was having tea in a tea room and a lady was trying to get some one on the phone and she forgot what number she wanted and gave the wrong one, and people around looked at each other as if to say, 'How like a woman!' and then she had to put another nickel in the slot for the same call, and every one got quite interested and said to each other what a robber the telephone company was. Oh, these things interest me as much as a play. I have the best time, whether I'm alone or not, for even if there isn't some one to watch I can always think and imagine things.

"Yes, I have a lot to be glad about," finishes *Pollyanna* as she jumps off the car at the theatre street. "And I'll be gladdest of all if New York likes me well enough to let me stay here all winter with my father and mother and grandmother and brothers and I do not have to go on the road."

THE BROOKLYN PLAYS

John Barrymore will be seen at the Montauk Theatre this week in John Galsworthy's social tragedy, "Justice." This play has repeated everywhere this season its great success at the Candler Theatre last spring.

"The Blue Paradise," which was sung for an entire winter at the Casino Theatre here, will be the attraction at the Majestic Theatre this week. An admirable company including such well known comedians as John Young and Robert Pitkin are in the cast.